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THE INTEGRATION OF IMMIGRANTS IN SCHOOLS

Principal Investigators: Bruce Weinberg, Department of Economics

In multicultural societies, people from different groups must deal with one another. Yet the ways in which they do this vary widely. How much do the groups integrate? How much do they segregate? How much influence does the majority group have on minorities, and vice versa?

Bruce Weinberg and co-investigator Shqiponja Telhaj from University of Sussex set out to answer these questions by focusing on the microcosm of schools. Integration in schools is particularly important because they are a formative environment. Students who do not integrate in schools are less likely to be successful in the labor market.

Weinberg is using a dataset of more than 40 million records over eight years from schools in London, one of the most diverse cities in the world, to examine the effects of immigrants on the educational outcomes of native-born students and on the immigrants themselves.

From previous research supported by the Mershon Center, Weinberg found that minority groups integrate when they have small numbers, but as their numbers grow, they tend to segregate.

Some of the variables Weinberg is considering in the current study include the size of the school, the size of the immigrant population, and overall test scores. For example, if immigrants at a school have low test scores, is it because they are immigrants or because they are in a poor school? To determine this, Weinberg is comparing immigrant test scores to those of native-born students as well as tracking immigrant test scores across different grades and schools.

Weinberg will also examine whether immigrants who do well bring up the majority population, or if they are so segregated that there are in effect two different populations. He will also be able to see the effect of immigrants on different types of schools (for example, those that offer free meals), or different types of students (for example, special needs classes).

The goal is to produce a pilot study suitable for inclusion in a larger grant proposal.



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1501 Neil Ave., Columbus, OH 43201


Phone: 614-292-1681 | Fax: 614-292-2407

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